

ISSANJI

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER

57 Hartford Street, San Francisco, California, 94114
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- FALL 1999 -

Hartford Street Zen Center is a small Buddhist temple of the Soto Zen tradition situated in the heart of the Castro district. We offer a daily schedule of Zen Buddhist meditation, sitting instruction, Saturday Public lectures, and mid-day sittings for the HIV community and caregivers. HSZC was started in 1981 by a group of gay and lesbian Buddhist practitioners to serve everyone in the neighborhood. It is also called Issanji, One Mountain Temple, after our founder Issan Dorsey Roshi. The resident teacher is Zenshin Philip Whalen.

Dependent Origination

by Jim Wilson

Excerpts from his talk at HSZC in June. Jim is a Zen teacher in Sonoma of the Chogyo, Fuke and Soto Zen traditions.

On the morning that Shakyamuni became the Awakened One, the Buddha, he saw the morning star in the sky and woke up. What did he see that morning that he didn't see other mornings? He'd seen the morning star before. But this morning something was different. He referred to this difference as dependent origination. Everything that exists is dependent on causes and conditions, not just at inception, but from moment to moment. The Buddha saw that everything exists connected to everything else. But it's not obvious. You have to dive into this central realization...

We have this idea that everything exists depending on causes and conditions, but we also have a strong habit of mind that thinks we exist separately. My thoughts, my

emotions, and my body – certainly not anybody else's! That habit of mind is persistently reinforced as we move through the world. Contemplating the nature of dependent origination is an antidote to that habit of mind. Observe this mind in others and self when we create artificial boundaries between people. Like the border between East and West Germany. Where did that border come from? Now that border is gone. Where did that border go?



Another way of unpacking the meaning of dependent origination is to contrast the Buddha's insight with other tradition's points of view on the ultimate nature of things. In many traditions each individual thing has a separately existing soul – what anthropologists call animism. Buddha talked about meditation and states of consciousness, about thoughts, emotions, and ideas. So he was clearly aware of the interior reality people have. But this interior consciousness doesn't exist separately. That was his insight. No separately existing soul.

If you examine your thoughts it is quite humbling to realize they all

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come from somewhere else – like Walter Cronkite, Time Magazine, mom and dad. Any idea a person feels strongly about is a gift from other people. There is no separately existing soul in the realm of thoughts... The phenomenon of feeling is even harder to see with detachment. But those who have spent endless hours in therapy sometimes discover emotional themes. Oh that's why I reacted that way! There is an emotional stance passed on from person to person. Our emotional life also does not exist separately.

What about consciousness or awareness itself? Sometimes we are acutely aware and sometimes pretty dim. The coming and going of consciousness is also due to conditions. When the habit of mind that sees things existing separately is taken away there is a strong tendency to feel that nothing exists at all. Sometimes we experience that in meditation. One observes the stream of thoughts and emotions and experiences how gossamer and unsubstantial they are. It feels like something you relied upon is no longer there. If you can overcome that fear and engage with a deeper letting go, you are buoyed up by existence. The net of interdependence suddenly fills you. The absence of separation reveals the fullness of everything. From the perspective of the Buddha's understanding, the ultimate nature of things is not separate from the realm of experience. "Not only here, not only there, the truth is right before your very eyes."

The first way to move from a sense of separation to the experience of interconnectedness is through meditation. The purpose of Zen and Buddhism is not to give us a lobotomy. We need to discriminate between an oncoming truck and a rock... Stop considering your ideas as real, stop grasping at your thoughts. When you enter into meditation, thoughts and impulses stream by and you don't act on them. The energy consumed by the brain drops into the rest of your body. There is a very natural awakening of the heart, which is the means to experience the connectedness of all things. The head can't understand, but the heart does. The heart is the basis for compassion and empathy and caring.

All of existence shares that boundless heart. And that heart beats through all of existence. All of existence is a manifestation of compassion and caring. Everything that exists comes to us as a gift. Whatever tiny awakening I have had is due to countless teachers in the past who laid the groundwork so I could meditate, study, and comprehend the tiny bit I comprehend. Every breath is a gift. Not just for me but for all of existence.

Awakening to the heart of boundless compassion and love is the direction of our practice. Moment to moment everything arises due to the interconnectedness of all things. Moment to moment everything in existence is a gift. I hope that you will persevere, until all sentient beings are free from the delusion of separation and their suffering ends.



HSZC-What is it?

by David Prowler

What is Hartford Street Zen Center? We each may have different ideas: A place to sit zazen early in the morning or evening. A community center. A club house. A Gay and Lesbian Zen temple. A temple serving the Castro neighborhood or one for everyone everywhere. A neighborhood Zen temple. A lecture hall. A place to take classes. A place to visit every once in a while, regularly or not at all.

At one time it was a working-class house in a working-class neighborhood, where generations were born, grew up, had families, and died. In the 1970's; it was a Tibetan Buddhist center in the tradition of Trungpa Rinpoche; then it became a Zen Center in 1981 under Issan's spiritual leadership. Issan founded Maitri Hospice, which served over 200 men and women with AIDS – who lived and died there. Speakers from many traditions have shared their practice with us—Allen Ginsberg, Ram Dass, Brother David, Patti Smith to mention a few, and of course our resident teacher Zenshin Philip Whalen, beat poet and Zen master.

So what do you want Hartford Street Zen Center to be? What is the most authentic form for a neighborhood Zen Center on Hartford Street in San Francisco, California in the year 2000? How can we best use our temple as a place to wake up and to help other people to wake up? It doesn't exist in a vacuum - it's us (meaning you too). Let us know what Hartford Street Zen Center is to you and what you want it to be. Write the newsletter a letter, or send us an email at HSZC@aol.com. Best of all, come to the members meeting on Sunday, October 24th from 2-4pm. And let's keep asking – what is it?

HSZC NEWS

In July, Sozan moved out after a two-year's residency at HSZC, to further his monk's training at San Francisco Zen Center. His presence is missed. Please extend a warm welcome to new resident Jim Mitchell. Our resident teacher, Zenshin Philip Whalen, is currently residing at Mt. Zion Hospital following a bout of ill health. We hope for his return as soon as he is fit enough to navigate the steep stairs of our old Victorian. Zenshin is tired of hospital food and has requested care packages of kim chee, deli sandwiches, Frito's, pickles and T-bone steaks. Update: As of 9/23 news is that Zenshin will be released from hospital next Monday!

Many thanks to outgoing board members for their dedicated service the past few years-Jaku Kinst, Kokai Roberts, Sozan Schellin, Top Castano, Shunko Jamvold, and Carl Jerome. We welcome Barbara Kohn and Jennifer Birkett to the HSZC board.

At our September board meeting, Barbara Kohn encouraged us to empower this organization and each other in the absence of our teacher. There is a need for traditional structure in Zenshin's absence, but when up against the wall, we must do what works. A predominately lay sangha has to support and encourage each other in both practice and perception. When Zenshin ascended the Mountain Seat in 1992, he said "the seat is empty, take good care of yourselves".

We enjoyed a fine poetry reading on August 21st at Fort Mason's Cowell Theater with Gary Snyder, Michael McClure, Norman Fischer, Joanne Kyger, Diane DiPrima, Leslie Scalapino, David Meltzer, Michael Rothenberg, Clark Coolidge, David Haselwood, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Bill Berkson reading from Philip Whalen's newly published *OverTime: Selected Poems*. The selection of poems that each reader made revealed a particular geography of a huge mountain range of work. It was a large, warm tribute, marred only by Zenshin's illness and inability to attend. Similar tributes were also held in Manhattan and Los Angeles. The August-September issue of *Poetry Flash* has a recent interview with Zenshin by David Meltzer.

Please attend our **Annual Member's Meeting**

Sunday, October 24th, 2:00 to 4:00 pm

We will be discussing HSZC's direction and voting for new board members.

Mark your calendar!

Mindful Work Morning Sunday, October 17th, 9:00 to 11:30 am. A chance to practice mindful-ness and clean the zendo at the same time!

For more information please call 863-2507.

Half-day Sit Sunday, October 31st, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Led by Jerome Peterson.

For more information please call 863-2507.

Saturday Dharma Talks Thanks to Zenshin, Jeffrey Schneider, Lou Hartman, Barbara Kohn, Daigan Lueck, Venerable Hyunoong Sunim, Mark Lancaster, Jim Wilson, Tova Green, Cathleen Williams, Kokai Roberts, Jordan Thorn, David Prowler, Lynn Menefee, and Fuyu Nancy Schroeder for sharing their sense of practice with us.

Community Thrift Store 625 Valencia St. at 17th. 415-861-4910. Please keep your donations of old clothes, furniture and books coming. Drop off donations at the side door on Sycamore Alley, and register them to HSZC, account #155.

Newsletter Production

Donations for production costs appreciated!

Editor: Jennifer Birkett, 415-647-0465, e-mail: Msguided@PacBell.net.

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Post Office delivery: Don Herald.

A Fish Story

by Fuyu Nancy Schroeder

Excerpts from her talk at HSZC in June. Fu has been a Zen priest since 1986 and lives at Green Gulch Farm.

I have been studying Zen Master Dogen lately and really admire the teaching that came from his mind. But whenever I read Dogen some part of me wants to know of his life. Did he have a cat, a lover, a sweet tooth? So today I would like to say something about my real life since for me practice takes place in the very ordinary world – just like yours and mine.

Last week, a friend gave my six-year-old daughter two goldfish for her birthday-Jordan and Jake. Two days later Jordan, the gold one, was dead at the bottom of the fish bowl. Her other mother and I spent time talking with Sabrina. Do you remember shoebox burials when you were children? It's a very serious thing when something dies that you have come to love. The next day I picked up Sabrina from school and brought her back with Jordan II whom I had bought at Critterland. We let him into the bowl and watched him swim around. About ten minutes later when Jake rolled over and died, I thought, "it's not fair." But that didn't change anything. She and I were both in shock. When Jordan II was also dead the next day I wasn't so surprised.

How do we cope when these real things happen in our lives? What's amazing about this bowl of fish is that right there in my living room was the appearance of the great matter of birth and death. This philosophical concern has haunted human kind from the beginning. At our core we are all curious about "what is going to happen to me?" As this question comes up I reflect on my Buddhist practice. If we sit in meditation we will evolve patience and acceptance of these things. But I have been sitting in the zendo for years and when a new baby arrives I am overjoyed and when things die I am grief stricken. So I wonder about my practice. Am I misunderstanding the teachings? There is a story of an old master whose wife is dying and he sits in front of his house beating a drum. A student asked, "teacher, if it is all an illusion why are you grieving?" He replied, "it's an illusion but it's very sad."

Not so long ago I had a glowing idea about enlightenment that I shared with senior Dharma teacher, Mel Weitsman. He said, "who ever told you that

enlightenment was something you'd come to like?" That was a shock. I had read many books describing enlightenment and thought it was something I'd like with every fiber of my being... When we read these things our minds become the words. There you are flying on these words. It's wonderful. But mind doesn't stop with these joys. Every day of our life includes life and death, birth and death.

When we sit zazen we convey some calmness of mind and uprightness in the body. These things come to us. A calm mind sees everything – inside and out, dogs, cats and fish – without being bound by them. Suzuki roshi said, "if you are determined to sit, you should not try to find some easy way." To find absolute composure right where you sit, when it is hot, be hot and when cold, be cold. It is not about changing the thermostat. What has to change is our understanding of how we suffer. We need to find who we really are and what is going on. It's not easy. Sometimes when you don't answer at all it seems closer to the mystery. We may never be able to say who we are but with every sight, smell, sound there is a continuous abundant arrival into our lives.

Buddha said that there is no such thing as a self. Certainly not in the way we think. He also said that grasping things is a source of suffering. A true master holds no views. The antidote to holding views is called emptiness. Things are empty of our implications, of what we say about them. They are free. We make up the world through a system of upside-down views and this is called the circle of birth and death, samsara, the world of suffering. Buddha was studying this when he awakened. Illusion is pretty entertaining and we are rather fond of it. That's how we live in this world. It's not that we should do away with illusion, but we should understand how it works.

To study the Buddha way is to study the self and all the stories coming out from it. Practice doesn't bring the world to an end. What does change is how you see it. And how do we do this ultimate trick? We do the simple thing, which is to sit. The easier to do the harder to explain. Something happens when you sit. You sit by the side of the pond and you wait and watch. One by one all the creatures of the forest come forward. On the inhalation the world arises. And on the exhalation the world descends. Like a bright green turtle on the open ocean. Wonderful!

Maitri Update

by Cecilia Tom

Is summer here yet or is it over? It's hard to tell in San Francisco. Our residents planned a beach trip during one hot week when the East Coast was frying. Of course, the day that they picked turned out to be gray and windy, which meant freezing on Baker Beach. But they went anyway, barbecue, picnic and all - a great occasion for bonding and huddling. Back at home, our dining room, being somewhat freer from the dictates of climate and time of day, was transformed into a disco ball one Wednesday afternoon, DJ-ed by our own chef Cari Campbell. The glitzy purple dress of Loretta, the party food, and the bodies all swaying to the tune of YMCA brought extra energy to those who must live with debilitating AIDS each day. Maitri's residents are entitled to music, fun and love, as are any of us. We try our best to make sure they get some nice doses to complement all the other pills they have to take.

Our volunteers have been doing double duty lately, spending time with our residents and also acting as servers, ushers, money counters and clean-up people for the various benefits that Maitri was engaged in, including AIDS Walk, Help Is On The Way, and Macy's Passport. They have also attended monthly in-services, such as the "Death and Personalization" workshop conducted by Jeremy Hollinger, MFCC. The persistence and compassion of our faithful helpers allow Maitri to be the caring home that it is. From doctors' appointments to dishes in the kitchen, we depend on volunteers to make things happen. If you want to join this tradition of selfless service and caring that Issan started 12 years ago, please call us at (415) 558-3000.



ZEN DISH

Your letters and articles are always welcome. Next newsletter deadline is December 1st. Write HSZC, Attn. Newsletter, Email HSZC@aol.com, or call Jennifer Birkett at 415-647-0465.

Hospital Chaplain Diary-Segment

by Bruce Boone

Bruce is a longtime practitioner at HSZC and a hospital chaplain.

Overnight duty in the hospital. Sleeping in the windowless chaplain room and the pager intrudes. Dozed off while reading "Marks of the Buddha" - book on my lap. 2am. Call from intensive care unit: "An elderly woman" says the nurse. "She doesn't have long. There is nobody with her." Walking into Intensive Care in my chaplain mode, peering in. She's alone in the eerie luminescent glow of life-support machines, tubing in and out of her body from lung pumping machine. A half-light spreads out from her dying body - shining around her white hair! Standing still, gathering myself, fingering Buddhist prayer-bead MALA around wrist. Lips moving mantra - GATE GATE PARAGATE. Her parchment hand withering as light withdraws from extremities and halo's around her HEAD. The permeable hospital walls PIERCED by it. Light radiating downward and gathering itself from her body to this OTHER light - before beginning the return, to MEET ITSELF. Gathering up this spark of itself, accumulating until ready to SPURT OUT - to end the separation of itself from itself. To rejoin ITSELF!

BEEP BEEP - monitors in background. Sit quietly. Do zazen. Taking her hand in mine. Does big self recognize itself as our two little selves meet? Will she hear if I talk? Try. "You must be at a place where you can see both ways," I tell her. "If you want to come back that's okay. But if you're worn out and just want to go on, that's OK too." No answer. Machines beeping. Time goes by. I say, "I'm here holding your hand and know you're Catholic. Would you like a prayer?" No squeeze answers me. I assume yes. 23rd Psalm: "Even though I walk in the shadow of the valley of death I fear no evil for you are with me and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Tears. I hug her. Taking my

thumb and cross her forehead... I'm a Buddhist fish in a Christian sea but they say that at night all cows are black. I turn off the beeper and go outside the hospital onto the big rolling front lawn. Dying people in the hospital behind me, turning to sawdust. A recognition feeling. Crumbling separation walls.

On Coming and Going

by George Gayuski

One day a woman came by HSZC, no one had seen her before. She sat zazen and stayed for service. After, as she was leaving, Issan called out from the living room "GOOD BYE. Thank you for coming! ... You DID come, didn't you?" She was speechless as she went out the door.

Reigning Cats, Dogs, and Pigeons

by Sozan Schellin

I moved to San Francisco Zen Center recently to further my monk's education. It's only a few blocks from all those domes, high rises and public spaces downtown. And who haunts those spaces besides Mayor Willie Brown? Pigeons. They're everywhere, including my new windowsill that had no screen. The first two mornings in my new digs I woke to find both pigeons and their droppings all over my bed. I had to trip on up the F Line to Cliff's hardware for some screen fabric to keep them out... Page Street has a café at Laguna, and all kinds and sizes of café dogs appear because the management accidentally makes bits of turkey and bacon fall from the sky near the front door.

HSZC critters: One sunny day in July, Buckley the cat got stoned on catnip and was witnessed rolling around in the back yard dirt. Suddenly he sat up with a cigarette butt hanging out of his mouth with a "what-are-you-laughing-about" question on his face. Most of us still want to save Buckley, even though he's taken up tobacco. But Pigeons?

Buddhism is a Strange Fruit

by Mark Lancaster

Excerpts from his talk at HSZC in June. Mark is a lay practitioner who started formal study at SFZC in 1988.

I'd like to read you a dialogue between Bodhidharma, the first Indian ancestor who went to China, and his disciple T'ai tsu Hui-k'o. Hui-k'o asked Bodhidharma, "How do I quiet my mind?" And Bodhidharma replied, "bring me your mind so that it can be quieted." Hui-k'o said, "I can't find my mind." Bodhidharma replied, "I have now quieted your mind." Well that's it. Nothing more to add really. That's how to end suffering; and that's the ground and insight that we can build our whole life on. I can't find my mind. Where is that mind? What is mine? Who am I? Does that ground seem too shaky to build on? Good! That's where Buddha says to build your life; bring suffering and difficulty right here, engage with your very own life as it is.

True experience of No Mind or Vast Mind cannot be grasped just in words, it is your life. You have to experience that flavor. Buddha asks that you experience mind directly with mind. There is no separation, no duality. When you completely turn and look as Bodhidharma asks you to, you also take ancestor Dogen's backward step. But you have to look with all your heart and be that look, bring your whole hearted intention completely to this investigation of your life.

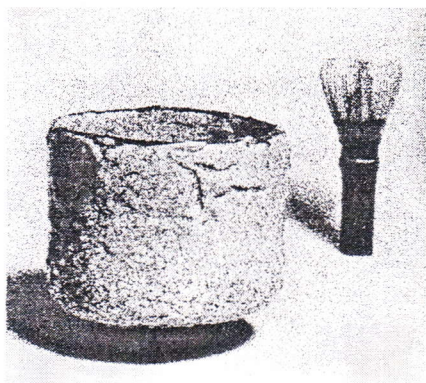
Buddha's teachings are not intended to substitute another world for this one. Nothing is lacking here. Right in the midst of jealous mind and happy mind is all the information we need to be free. What Bodhidharma is doing with Hui-k'o is turning mind back onto itself. Mind cannot really be separated into self and other, but because we think it is separate, somebody has to help us turn it back on itself, sharply and cleanly. Then, with time and patience you begin to have insight into the formation and existence of feelings, thoughts, physicality and ideas. How they arise, dance and fall apart. Then when you say, "I can't find my mind," you sense there is no permanent or separate entity dwelling here. No person inhabiting emotional responses. When you begin to see how things are really formed they start to open up, become more spacious.

You can see, for instance, the habit of anger – where

it came from in your life. What's conditioning it, keeping it alive, and how it disappears. And it's easy to get angry because our existence is so precarious. Especially when our small mind tries to create so much solidity. There is this underlying nervousness. But you don't have to react or be pulled around by it. And if you do make a mistake, please don't turn away. It's one mind expressing itself. Stay here. So you slipped, give yourself a break. Moment by moment everything comes into existence. So you can completely let the past moment go. Just keep yourself in the game. Don't give up. Meet anger and then maybe you will see there is nobody behind it. Go right into the place you don't want to be. It's very difficult to be there, but it is the way we return home to our true heart. In that shaky precarious openness.

We ask our teachers these questions; "Do you really know what is going on? What in God's name is going on with my practice?" And when we ask these questions the teacher can respond. Like Bodhidharma did with Hui-k'o. You build an intimate relationship with another human being. It's an important part of our Zen practice and of being a human being. Find your true heart and open up so you can find some space in your life. You are both trying to crack this situation open. That's what having a teacher is about – sharing your heart with someone.

But in the end you have to develop your own insight. Buddhism is a strange fruit. Another person can't taste it for you. They can describe it. That's what a teacher does. Try this, try that. But taste your life. You have to make a great effort. Our natural authentic self is revealed only under this intense pressure. There are parts we don't like, parts that have been hurt, parts you think are really great but you don't show people – all these parts have to be explored and opened up to.



HSZC Temple Schedule

HSZC offers a traditional schedule of Zen meditation. For those new to zazen, instruction required prior to participation in formal meditation periods, and is available by appointment. There is a public lecture every Saturday at 10am, followed by discussion and tea. All are welcome. Please arrive 10 minutes prior to scheduled times.

MORNING: Monday through Friday

5:45am Zazen

6:15am Interval

6:20am Zazen

6:45am Service

EVENING: Monday through Friday

6:00pm Zazen

6:40pm Service

SATURDAY:

9:10am: Zazen

10:00am: Public Lecture, followed by tea and discussion. Donation to support the temple is appreciated.

Beginning Zazen instruction available Monday-Friday by appointment. Call 415-863-2507.

Monthly Memorial Service for Temple founder Issan Dorsey Roshi is held on the 6th day of each month.

MEMBERSHIP Practicing members sit regularly, attend practice interviews with Zenshin and contribute a suggested \$40 monthly. Supporting members contribute \$20 or more a year and receive newsletters by mail. If you can pledge even \$10 a month, and give a little extra when able, this helps the fiscal health of our temple significantly. You are welcome as a member of our Sangha and we offer you whatever support you may need in your practice.

Groups Meeting at HSZC

HIV Sitting Group For those with HIV, caregivers, lovers, and friends. Currently meeting Thursday and Friday at 10:30 am. Sitting until 11:00 am. Meditation instruction offered. Contact: (415) 863-2507.

Schedule of Upcoming Talks and Events

Saturday, October 9th, 10:00 am Kokai Roberts, SFZC priest and Assistant to the Director at City Center.

Saturday, October 16th, 10:00 am Fuyu Nancy Schroeder, SFZC Priest since 1986, living at Green Gulch Farm.

Sunday, October 17th, 9:00 to 11:30 am Mindful Work Morning.

Saturday, October 23rd, 10:00 am Mark Lancaster, lay practitioner at Green Gulch Farm since 1993.

Sunday, October 24th, 2:00 to 4:00 pm Annual Member's Meeting. Please attend.

Saturday, October 30th, 10:00 am TBA

Sunday, October 31st, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm Half-day Sit.

Saturday, November 6th, 10:00 am Zenshin Philip Whalen. Resident teacher at HSZC.

Saturday, November 13th, 10:00 am Jaku Kinst, SFZC priest and former HSZC board member.

Saturday, November 20th, 10:00 am Jim Wilson, Zen teacher in Sonoma of the Chogyo, Fuke and Soto Zen traditions.

Saturday, November 27th, 10:00 am Myo Lahey, SFZC priest and former HSZC board member.

Saturday, December 4th, 10:00 am Zenshin Philip Whalen

Saturday, December 11th, 10:00 am: Mary Mocine, SFZC priest.

Saturday, December 18th, 10:00 am Jim Wilson. See Above.

Dec 25th - Jan 2nd No Speakers. Millennium Y2K break.

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